

## INTEGRATIVE METHOD COMPLETES FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROCESS

TASNUBHA BABLY

Assistant Professor English Language Institute United International University Dhaka, Bangladesh

### ABSTRACT

*This paper concerns the performance and responses in integrative method during a learner's adaptation to a foreign language. The way a human child learns the language is a complicated and mysterious process. But for adult, it is rather a neural adapting practice where, how fast the brain can convert and deliver is the major concern. The output mostly depends on the efficiency of the exercise schedule and practice time allocated for this. The typical schedules usually divide the learning process in several discrete sectors, through that the human neural network becomes competent individually, whereas, the applicability involves an overall integration among all of these. Both of these methodologies are important but certainly, a schedule reducing the gap is more appropriate. This paper proposes that an integrated subroutine is the key to that reduction. Through a classroom survey, a new learning proposition has been suggested here.*

**KEYWORDS:** Integrative Method, Discrete Method & SLA (Second Language Acquisition)

**Received:** Jan 18, 2017; **Accepted:** Feb 28, 2017; **Published:** Mar 04, 2017; **Paper Id.:** IJELAPR20173

### INTRODUCTION

Competency over a foreign language largely depends on the performance of basic four skills of any language. Without the well-balanced development of them, language learning becomes incomplete. However, in real life, reading, writing, speaking and listening all run parallel. Here, they are not distinct; rather it involves a natural integration of them. Therefore, whenever someone's communicative ability is tested, his or her performance in real life situation is checked which demands performance in multiple skills simultaneously. To ensure authenticity or to get optimal ESL/EFL communication, the design and implementation of such integrated learning process is a must. In this holistic process, a sequence of learning tasks is generated connecting all the associated skills in an appropriate context to ensure the highest proficiency of the learner.

"If one of the jobs of the teacher is to make the students 'communicatively competent' in the L<sub>2</sub>, then this will involve more than being able to perform in each of the four skills separately. By giving learners tasks that expose them to these skills in conjunction, it is possible that they will gain a deeper understanding of how communication works in the foreign language as well as becoming more motivated when they see the value of performing meaningful tasks and activities in the classroom." (McDonough and Christopher Shaw.1993)

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of works have been done in this area. Among them McDonough & Shaw (1993), Jeremi Harmer (2003), David Nunan (1989), Lubelsky & Mathews (1997) are some contributory figure.

According to Richards, Platt & Weber (1985), integrated learning process is “the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening & speaking in conjunction with each other as when a lesson involves activities that relate listening & speaking to reading & writing”. David Nunan (1989) has talked about task based integration method. It refers to a communicative practice of language activities. It integrates comprehension, production, manipulation, analysis and interaction in target language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form. According to Morrow (1981), “It is of course possible to identify various formal features of the way language is used communicatively & these can be studied individually. But the ability to handle these elements in isolation is no indication of ability to communicate”.

Harmer (2003) says “The fact that reception & production are so bound up together suggests strongly that we should not have students practice skills in isolation”. He suggests for integrated skill sequences, where the practice of one skill leads naturally to other linked activities. Lubelska and Matthews (1997) have given seven statements relating to integrated skills:

- Integrating skills involves using some or all of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing to practice new material (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and text/discourse).
- All four skills must be practiced in every lesson.
- As listening and speaking naturally go together, it is always desirable to integrate these two skills.
- The sequence hear-speak-read-write is the most appropriate for integrated skills work.
- A common topic, such as holidays or pets, is a device linking the separate activities in integrated skills lessons.
- If we want to develop specific sub-skills (reading for gist, guessing unknown words, etc.), it is necessary to focus on individual skills in some lessons.
- Integrated skills may be fine with a small group of adults, but it is difficult to do with large classes and in lessons lasting only 35 minutes.

There are two types of integrated process-

**Content Based:** Here, students practice all the language skills while learning content, i.e. science, Math, social studies etc. This is simultaneous learning of content and language. Here, language is used as a vehicle to talk about other things.

**Task based:** Here, the language activities, tasks are practices in communicative way. It integrates comprehension, production, manipulation, analysis and interaction in target language while attention is principally paid to meaning rather than form (Nunan: 1989)

## THEORETICAL VERSUS PRACTICAL LEARNING

Two most common terms in SLA (Second Language Acquisition) - ‘learning’ and ‘acquisition’ make the distinction between these two areas clear. ‘Learning’ is the conscious process, which takes place because of formal instruction. It concerns the form of language. The next one - ‘Acquisition’ is the result of a sub-conscious process, which requires meaningful and natural interaction in the target language. It actually leads to practical learning which remains incomplete in the absence of integrated practice as it aims to achieve authentic communication.

Segregated-skill approach is the outcome of theoretical learning. It is known as language based approach because here the focus concerns language. According to it, competence is gained over discrete language skill. Traditionally this practice has been followed in our language programs. These are conscious development of language. Learners become expert of the knowledge of language rather than use. Definitely, this discrete knowledge makes a learner strong and it does not impede his performance. Besides this practice, the additional integrative practice makes language acquisition more efficient and successful. In fact, learning strategies employed by the sub-conscious mind are not skill specific. These are always blending of all the associated skills.

So, integrated process, which promotes practical language learning, enhances learner's real performance. Discrete skills development makes him competent and integration further affirms his fluency and appropriacy. Perfect combination of these two processes makes the learner proficient user of language.

The following table shows the difference between these two areas.

**Table 1: Differences between Integrated Process and Discrete Process**

S. No	Area	Integrated Process	Discrete Process
1	Content	Real life oriented.	Theory oriented.
2	Knowledge	Andragogic	Pedagogic
3	Language	Function focused.	Form focused.
4	Learning area	Both inside and outside the classroom.	Mainly inside the classroom.
5	Objective	Gaining competence and performance according to learner's need.	Gaining knowledge.
6	Learning activity	Each stages are connected logically, one leading to another	Unconnected, individual competence based.
7	Material	Real life based	Text based
8	Skill gained	A coherent set of skills	Specific skill

## NEURAL WORK OF BRAIN WHILE LEARNING LANGUAGE

According to Neuron-science, when we exercise something in our brain, then individual sections of our brain develop. Real skill comes when these individual parts start to work together. So, if a person practice reading, writing, speaking and listening separately, this will make his brain individually expert, but not skilled. He will be considered as a skilled person only when he can integrate over all of these sections. Our brain gets ready to the interconnected process of signals and response.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The study targets to find out the success and failure level of integrative and discrete method applying it on some undergrad level students. The strengths and limitations of the method also have been tried to find out that will be further effective for the design of syllabus and material of any ESL (English as a Second Language) course.

## SURVEY

To find out the real situations, a survey has been conducted upon some groups of students of tertiary level who took the course "Developing Basic English" as a fundamental language course. All of them are students of first trimester in a private university of Bangladesh. Their performances& responses have been observed closely with discrete learning situations and integrated schemes. During a trimester, up to the 1<sup>st</sup> mid-term (45 days), four skills were taught in discrete ways and then up to final exam (next 45 days) the syllabus was modified for the same group of students by adding some

integrated tasks. For the three consecutive trimesters in a year, the approach was followed with three groups of students. In the second approach (integrated one), learning has been constructed as a process of participation. Rather than following a pre-determined discrete set of tasks, learning has been incorporated in some open-ended logically ordered steps. While making module for integration, following ways have been tried to focus

- There were varied and rich comprehensible inputs through audio-visual or interesting texts.
- Scopes were created to manipulate language relevantly in different steps.
- Skills were integrated considering spontaneous connections, not as a pre-requisite obligation.

Sample of some of the activities those were practiced have been showed below.

### Module-1

**Activity:** Debating

Stages	Topic	Skill
<b>Stage 1:</b>	Teacher and students together selected a topic	Speaking
<b>Stage 2:</b>	Students studied about the topic and gathered information	Reading
<b>Stage 3:</b>	Students prepared script	Writing
<b>Stage 4:</b>	They delivered speech	Speaking
<b>Stage 5:</b>	While listening they concentrated to others logics	Reasoning
<b>Stage 6:</b>	They prepared counter argument and notes	Listening

This one was highly motivating and extremely helpful. As, the arguments were very unpredictable, students had to be highly attentive and use the language spontaneously. In this activity, estimated concentration distribution was as followed: Reading = 20%, Writing = 15%, Speaking = 35% and Listening = 30%

### Module-2

**Situation:** Simulation. Students made a plan of foreign tour.

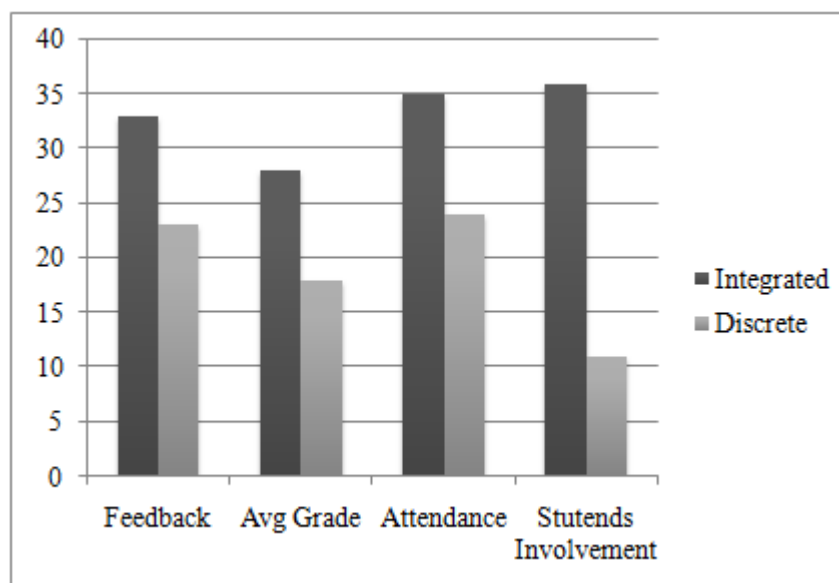
- Students collected information about the tourist-spots in that country, hotel-fair, transport system, expenses etc. to build up some anticipation.(Reading)
- Two students played the role of ticket seller and buyer. All the necessary information was given to them earlier, but they did not know what the other participant knew. (Speaking)
- They made a report about the trip. (Writing)
- They took the interview of a teacher to get some more picture of that place. (Speaking, Listening and Writing)
- Finally, it was followed by a class presentation. (Speaking)

**Module 3:** The most practical example of this practice is taking an effective communicative class. Where teacher shared experience, students paid attention and responded through asking questions. They participated in study and preparing answers, got feedback and tried to pursue that. It incorporated all the four skills.

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

In integrative method, the progress of the class was exceptionally outstanding. Rather knowledge gaining, the classroom became a lively learning center. After a certain time, the improvement of the student's performance as an expert real life user was remarkable.

**Survey Analysis:** In each class, there were 40 students. Among them, 80% students gave positive feedback for integrated approach. Following this, they had better performance in their exam. Class attendance was raised largely. On an average, 35 students were present in each class. Most of them, like 36 students were found involved in the tasks.



**Figure 1: Responses of Integrative and Discrete Method**

**Questionnaire:** At the end of the trimester, all the students were asked some qualitative and quantitative questions about the application of integrated approach.

In the questionnaire main focuses were –

- Whether the students enjoy the process or not
- If it enhances their progress
- If it helps to face real life challenge or not.
- It's scope to use creativity
- It can replace traditional discrete method or not
- Student's satisfaction with evaluation process
- The most improved skills
- Strong sides and drawbacks (Appendix-questionnaire)

## FINDINGS

Most of the students (82%) enjoyed it; they got it creative (80%), reflecting real life (90%), helpful to progress (93%). But a good number of students (70%) did not consider it as a replacement of discrete methods and 35 % were not satisfied with the evaluation process.

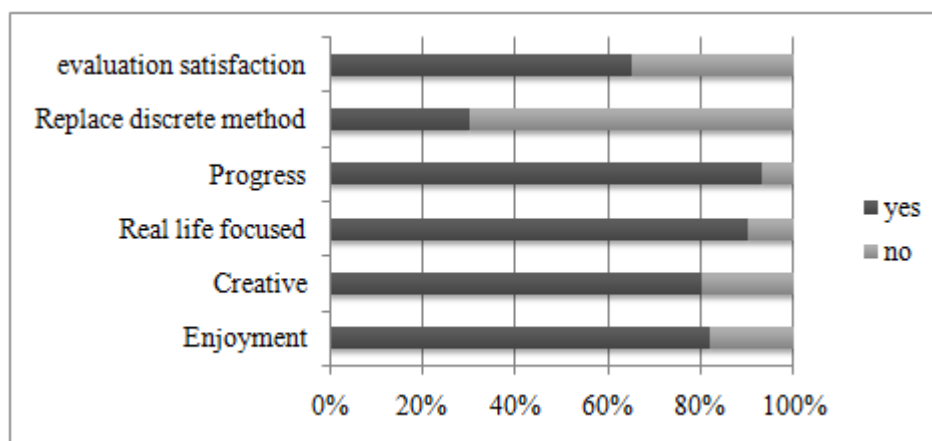


Figure 2: Survey Result of the Questionnaire

**Skill Development:** One of the major flaws of the method was less emphasis on writing development. The most developed skill was found speaking (46%). Rests of the distributions are showed in the following figure.

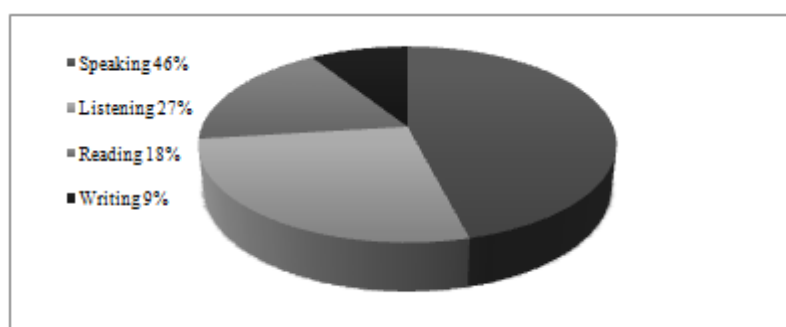


Figure 3: Skill Development in Integrative Method

### How Integrated Process Reduces the Gap between Learning Theoretically and Practically

In this study, a number of advantages of integration were found those contribute a great in acquisition of language.

- Promotes effective ELT methodology: It brings ELT theory & educational psychology into closer connection with teaching practices.
- Realistic learning: They get exposure to real life interaction. By demonstrating the wide variety, richness and complexity of communication, learning becomes practical, pragmatic and stimulating.
- Learner centered approach: Teacher's role is less focused, so students get enough opportunities to practice and exposure to be a spontaneous and proficient user.

- Boosts student's involvement and motivation: By reflecting authenticity and creating amusement it involves and motivates students of all levels and background to a great extent. Rather than instrumental motivation (learning with specific objects), it promotes integrated one (effort to be a part of target language community). Thus exam or grade-oriented learning is discouraged. As it draws interests, students get enthusiastic that helps to learn fast.
- Develops multiple skills in a coherent way: One skill actually helps to acquire other skill. The proficiency depends upon the way we absorb the reaction of audience & how we respond to them. Traditional approach can never serve this aspect of language. "Effective speaking also involves a good deal of listening, an understanding of how the other participants are feeling & knowledge of how linguistically to take turns or allow others to do so." (Harmer. 1991)
- Humanistic approach: It is a good way to develop learner's logical thinking, reasoning and the habit of learning language by creating images of real life. It makes them think more deeply about life.
- Inspires co-operative learning: Through involving a number of students together, it encourages group work. Not all the students are equally good at various skills. One student may be a good speaker but does not enjoy writing. So, in the discrete way s/he never enjoys writing class. But, blending all the skills, all types of student's attention is drawn and boredom of typical language classroom is eliminated. Learners get opportunities to remove shyness and hesitations that develops confidence and promotes inter-personal communication skills.
- Exposes learners to authentic language and materials: Integration simulates realistic and context-specific learning. So besides pedagogic learning, andragogy is encouraged. Not only text books, rather storybooks, newspaper, movie, supplementary, audio-visual aids are used to promote authentic learning.
- Utilizes schema: It helps them to utilize acquired & prior knowledge that plays a significant role in language development.

## LIMITATIONS

A number of obstacles were found also to implement this approach effectively –

- This whole procedure entirely depended on the student's co-operation. Any student could any time stop paying attention leaving the whole attempt a failure.
- Evaluation procedures were not valid and reliable.
- It consumed time. Due to that, growth of every single student was not possible to ensure.
- As most of the times, it involved group or pair work, giving individual feedback became tough.
- Inter-personal skills development was hindered sometimes due to inactive partner. In case of group/pair activity, the inefficient or poor member made the activity boring and unsuccessful. It was difficult to work without proper match.
- All skills did not get equal exposure. Most of the times, for the shortage of time, writing got less priority, so basic weakness were found in this skill.
- Logistical arrangement was difficult and not cost effective always.

- It needed much practice to concentrate on more than one skill simultaneously.
- When it was less explicitly planned, outcome was poor.
- Teachers needed high patience and enthusiasm.
- Applying in a large classroom was not possible.

To overcome these problems, Teachers should learn more about the various ways to integrate properly. S/he should feel the necessity of the students. If s/he does it only as a learning activity for the sake of knowledge, it will not work. Rather both teachers and students should be motivated and enthusiastic enough to apply it effectively.

### **SOME RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION**

- The simultaneous movement from one skill to another definitely requires expertise in the basic skills first. Making a strong basic ground of segregated skills – specially reading and writing is the primary requisite to make integrative method fruitful. Only integrated method does not work out. It should be assimilated with a balanced growth of discrete skills. Integration is an additional subroutine that ensures completeness of learning. A good number of discrete skill development strategies and exercises are essential; gradually this isolated practice has to be discouraged. Learner's concentration should be extended in a multi-tasking state where the conscious knowledge is transformed into sub conscious practice.
- Besides, integration of four basic skills, a significant amount of emphasis has to be given on the development of the associated skills of sentence structure (syntax), vocabulary, and so on.
- Integration must be done strategically pursuing any goal.
- While making materials, it should be carefully considered to involve learner's simultaneous brain storming, attention, analysis, synthesis, reflection, self-evaluation, range of making questions, planning and prediction.
- While shifting from one to another skill, extra attention is required, as this is the high time of distraction.
- Instructor's creativity, enthusiastic involvement, and intelligence to adopt the material according to the situation of the class are indispensable to get the success.
- To save time, group activity can be encouraged or short activity can be generated integrating two-three skills together, for example- reading-writing, reading-speaking, listening-speaking, listening-reading-writing etc.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

We have to remember that individual skill learning strategies are always first priority. It should not be ignored. Just besides this, the use of this integrated sub-routine makes the best combination of learning. We should not do this in every class. Traditional discrete skills should be taught in their own established ways. This integration should be practiced with periodic classes.

In fact, there is always natural overlap of different skills in language learning. In our daily lives, we rarely use language skills in isolation but in conjunction. So, we should make integrated process as a regular part of our syllabus. In the initial classes, some problems may arise, but with regular practice, gradually they go away. If it can be established successfully, Language learning will be as easy as participating in a game.



## REFERENCES

1. Harmer, J. (2003). *The practice of English Language Teaching*. England: Pearson Education Ltd.
2. McDonough, Jo. Shaw, Christopher. (2003). *Materials and methods in ELT*. UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
3. Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
4. Nunan, D (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill/Contemporary.
5. Selinker, Larry. Tomlin, Russell S. (1986). *An Empirical Look at the Integration and Separation of Skills in ELT*. *ELT J.* 40(3). 227-235. doi: 10. 1093/elt/40.3.227
6. Ur, Penny. (1991). *A course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

## APPENDICES

## Students Questionnaire

Name:

Age:

Course enrolled:

Duration of the course:

Types of the course:

Instruction:

- Put tick marks in the correct field according to your opinion.
- Which skill did you improve most following this method?

Ans.

- Give some of your opinions about the strong sides and drawbacks of integrative method.

Ans.

**Table 1**

Se.	Questions	Yes	No
i.	Did you enjoy the activities?		
ii.	Do you think it helped you better to progress in language acquisition?		
iii.	Did it assist to take real life challenges?		
iv.	Did you get any scope to use your creativity?		
v.	Can it replace traditional discrete method?		
vi.	Were you satisfied with evaluation process?		

